AN

EPISTLE

To a Member of

PARLIAMENT,

CONCERNING

Mr. *George Oldner's* Invention

To Preserve

SHIPS

FROM

Foundering or Sinking at Sea, &c.

London, Printed in the Year. 1699.

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An Epiſtle to a Member of Parliament, concerning Mr. *George Oldner*'s Invention to Preſerve Ships from Foundering or Sinking at Sea, &c.

SIR,

IN Obedience to your Commands, I have made it my Buſineſs to Search out for moſt of the New Pamphlets that have been Publiſh't, ſince I had the Happineſs of your Converſation, at your Houſe in the Countrey. 'Tis true, we live in a very Teeming Age: Never was the Preſs more guilty of Impertinent Productions, than ſince the Expiration of the Act of Licenſing: The whole Nation ſeems to have run a Gadding, and every little Trifler ſets up now for Wit, Politicks, or Projects. But amongſt all that have appear'd openly, none ſeems to be more endu'd with ſuch a Monſtrous and Unaccountable Air of Whimſie and Confidence, as the Invention of Mr. *George Oldner*, to preſerve Ships from Foundering and Sinking at Sea, *&c.* A noble Undertaking, I confeſs, if it can ever be Accompliſhed: But by the Method of his Propoſals, which I have ſent you, it may juſtly be ſuſpected to favour both of Deſign and Vanity. For he muſt certainly have a very mean Opinion of Mankind, to ſuppoſe they can be prevail'd upon to Join in his Subſcriptions, upon ſo ſlender a Foundation, as an Experiment of his Invention made in a Model of Six Foot long, in the River, upon the Teſtimony of Half a Score Honeſt Gentlemen, ſome of whom, poſſibly, are not equal Judges; and one of the moſt Honourable of them, by his own Marginal Acknowledgment, was not preſent at the Trial. For, what Proportion is there, I beſeech you, betwixt

a Ship of Three or Four Hundred Tun, and his Diminitive Model? Or betwixt the *Thames* and the Main *Ocean*? Can there be any possible Comparison between the Effects of his little Model, and those of a Loaden Ship of a Thousand Tun in Tempestuous Weather? Besides, that there is a Wonderful difference in the Effects of Water near the Surface, and Deeper down. But because I wou'd not exceed the Dimensions of a familiar Letter, I shall only take notice of some few Observations that occurr'd in the reading his Proposal, and so leave it to your more mature Consideration, whether it may deserve any Encouragement from the House, if ever it shall have the Confidence to appear in Parliament.

There is then no manner of Argument from the Performance of his Model: An Averrment in such Cases is very Doubtful and Presumptuous, and the Event has put very Wise Men to a *Nonplus*. As great Certainties, and as well Founded as This, have utterly failed in the Proof, as in the Experiment of the Diving Engines, where there appear'd a wonderful Disproportion in the Effects of the Model, and the main Works.

The Disingenuity of these Patentees ought to be Consider'd, who have made bold to Misapply to their Service, a Certificate given by the *Chirurgeons* in favour of a much more Considerable *Invention*, which has so far approv'd it self by sundry full and open Experiments, as to merit a Vote from the House of Commons, the last Sessions, for its Favour and Encouragement. This is a very Un-Gentleman-like Prevarication, to Impose a Certificate of another's Invention upon the World, in Evidence of the goodness of their Project: And in *primo limine*, in the very beginning of their Endeavours, gives us probable Grounds to suspect the Sincerity of their whole Proceeding.

Again, considering they Affirm their Invention to be so Contriv'd, that it will take very little Room, requires little Labour, not Difficult, but done with small Charge, *&c.* If it be so Cheap and Easie, had it not been reasonable for them to have made their Experiment at large, in a Ship already Built, and not pretend

tend to Wheedle Mankind with the *Chimerical* Effects of an Insignificant Model? This wou'd have put the Matter out of all Dispute, and have been a Noble and Inconteſtable Inducement to bring in Subſcribers.

Beſides, one of the Patentees offers, upon a Conditional Reward, to go to *Holland* in a Ship that has ſuch Breaches, that Twenty of the beſt known Pumps, tho' manag'd with as many Hands as can Work them, ſhall not be able to ſave her from ſinking Four or Five Hours together: But it would have been much more for his purpoſe, if he could truly have told us, that he return'd from thence in ſuch a Ship. All this, he ſays, is to be done with the Uſe but of Two Pumps, ſtanding in as little Room, and requiring as little Strength, as thoſe now generally uſed.

Now it is to be Obſerved, That a Ship Pump, in Uſe, delivers Eighty Tun of Water in an Hour; and a Gentleman pretended to the laſt Parliament, to produce a Pump ſhou'd do Fifteen times as much, which Amounts to Twelve Hundred Tun an Hour, and theſe Two little Pumps pretend to exceed that Twenty times, which ariſes to Twenty four Thouſand Tun of Water an Hour: *Credentne Poſteri!* Here's a brave Foundation now, whereon to build a Creed for *Apella* the *Jew!* For no Man but a *Solifidian* can Entertain ſuch a Belief.

Again, A *Secret*, liable to ſo many Doubts and Objections, and yet promiſing ſuch wonderful Effects, ought not to be hid in the Dark. It ought to ſupport it ſelf upon its own Sufficiency, and not ſuppoſe that the Atteſtation of a few private Gentlemen, is ſufficient to Overbear and Inveigle Mankind into Prepoſterous Subſcriptions againſt common Reaſon, and plain Sence, without very good *Security*, that the Subſcribers ſhall be reimburſed their Payments, if the Project prove ineffectual. Truth loves the open Light; 'tis Error and Impoſture that deſires Veils and Lurking Holes; to Conceal the Myſtery of their Project, under pretence of making an Advantage with Foreign

reign Nations, smells very Rank of Partiality and Design; as the Treaty they say they are upon with the *French*, *Dutch*, *Swede*, and other Neighbouring States, by way of Advantage and Rewards.

It had been a fairer Proceeding, to have postpon'd the vast Desire of Improving their own Interest, to the Good of the Publick, and not pretend to go Proling and Hawking abroad after Foreign Rewards, and in the mean while neglect the putting their Works forward at Home, for the Good of their Country. By this Method they wou'd have gotten more by advancing the Value of their Shares, than they could reasonably expect from those Exotic Rewards: Which, besides, if the Invention answers their Pretensions, can never be lost. This would have facilitated the Design of engaging Subscribers, and have been no Prejudice to the Undertakers, because they are assur'd of their Invention.

Again, These Propolals are Matters of great Consequence; 60000 *l.* is a very large Summ, to be rais'd upon a blind Confidence, and requires a due and mature Consideration of the Foundation, whereon they are built, and can never, without a strict Examination, have any Weight with thinking Men, much less a Parliament, who know by Experience, That main Works very often fall short, in answering the Ends that Models pretend to.

If they alledge, that the Sincerity and Integrity of the Persons Certifying, is a sufficient Foundation for Encouragement of Subscriptions; I reply, That nothing but meer Hopes of Gain, can induce any Rational Man into such a Belief, who knows that Water in its own Nature will not rise above its Level without Force or Violence: And that Length, Breadth and Depth, Number, Weight and Measure, Centre and Circumference, give Laws to all Natural and Mechanical Motions. Neither do the Qualifications of the Persons, making or composing any Engine or Instrument, whether they are Wise and Honest, Knaves or Fools, vary its Effects. For as

they

they are Compoſed, ſo they will Operate; for the [illegible] is Soveraign, and without Subjection.

To Conclude; for Innumerable Inſtances of Suſpicion and Inſincerity may be advanced againſt theſe Propoſals; they tell us, that for removing all Doubts, and for full Satisfaction of all Perſons that ſhall be concerned with them, they reſolve and declare, that no more than Fifty Shillings ſhall be paid, till a Conditional Grant of a Reward is obtain'd from the Government, and a Trial of the ſaid Invention be made by a Voyage to *Holland*, and the ſafe Arrival of the Ship at *Rotterdam*.

This is a new way of Removing of Doubts, by throwing us into greater; for 'tis deſir'd they would make it out, how a Promiſe of a Conditional Reward from the Government, will any ways aſcertain the Truth of their Invention? And how a Certificate from a Notary Public in *Rotterdam*, is of any Avail, to juſtifie what paſt in the Ship at Sea? Surely they needed not have been in ſuch haſte, but have ſtay'd till the ſafe Return of the Ship to *England*.

But what ſeems more ſtrange to me, is, That they abate the Value of their Invention, as they fall in their Price. For when they propos'd their Invention at 60000 *l.* Mr. *Lurtin* and Mr. *Warren* were for making the Experiment in a Ship to the *Streights*, or the *Weſt-Indies*; but now when they have deſcended to a Subſcription but of 15000 *l.* they will make their Voyage but to *Holland*: It ſeems now they begin to miſtruſt the Sufficiency of their Invention, being caution'd, perhaps, by the Succeſs of Sir *William Petty's Double-Keel'd Experiment*.

You may underſtand, Sir, by theſe few Obvious Hints, what a Baſis ſuch mighty Pretenſions are founded on: Notwithſtanding which, they have the Vanity to tell the World, in the *Flying-Poſt*, that ſeveral eminent Merchants have ſignify'd their Intentions to Subſcribe, and Pay large Sums of Money beforehand, to ſave themſelves the Trouble of Attending.

This

[illegible] palpable Man, and as incredible as the Prin[illegible] Proposal it self; [illegible] the first time that ever the [illegible]chants were so fond of parting with their Money, espe[illegible] a Prospect so doubtful, that few or none have yet [illegible] let into the Mystery of the Invention.

Really, Sir, I would do any thing, rather than lessen the [illegible]tation of any Proposal that shou'd tend to the Advan[illegible] of Mankind: But this is the boldest Stroke that I ever met with, propos'd with a serious Countenance; and a Prospect of such Effect and Influence as this pretends to, sought to have something more than a bare Attestation for its Encouragement and Confirmation.

When they have finish'd this Exploit, I hope they will find out a Method to teach Ships to fly; and shape a better Course to the Moon, than Monsieur *Bajerac* with all his Wit cou'd ever imagine.

Sir, I shall interrupt you no farther, but recommend the Proposal it self to your Perusal, which I doubt not will give you a second Tedious Entertainment.

F I N I S.